

Principals' Pay Fails to Keep Pace With Cost of Living

Annual Survey Examines Five Years' of Salaries

Although principals' and assistant principals' salaries have increased overall in the past five years, salaries for secondary school principals and assistant principals have not matched the consumer price index (CPI), according to a new report by Educational Research Service (ERS).

The CPI is the Department of Labor's measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services and is typically used to gauge increases in the cost of living. From 2000–06, the CPI has increased by 13.4%. In contrast, principals' salaries have increased by an average of 9.3%. Junior high and middle school principals' salaries increased by 9.4%, senior high school principals' salaries increased by 8.3%, junior high and middle

school assistant principals' salaries increased by 10.3%, and senior high school principals' salaries increased by 8.9%.

To put this in terms of real dollar values, the 2000–01 reported average salaries for junior high and middle school principals (\$77,382) and senior high school principals (\$83,367) would be equivalent to \$87,751 and \$94,538, respectively, in 2005–06 dollars. However, junior high and middle school principals actually earned an average salary of \$84,685—a decrease in present dollar value of \$3,066 (or 3.6%). Likewise, senior high school principals actually earned an average salary of \$90,260 in 2005–06—a decrease in present dollar value of \$4,278 (or 4.7%) over the five-year period.

Similarly, the reported 2000–01 average salaries for junior high and middle school as-

stant principals (\$63,709) and senior high school assistant principals (\$67,593) would be equivalent to \$72,246 and \$76,650, respectively, in 2005–06 dollars. However, these assistant principals actually earned an average salary of \$70,268 and \$73,622, respectively, in 2005–06—a decrease in present dollar value of \$1,978 (or 2.8%) and \$3,028 (or 4.1%), respectively, over the five-year period. Thus, the data show that when the past five years are viewed as a whole, principals and assistant principals are making about 3.5% less this year, on average, than they did five years ago when the cost of living is taken into account.

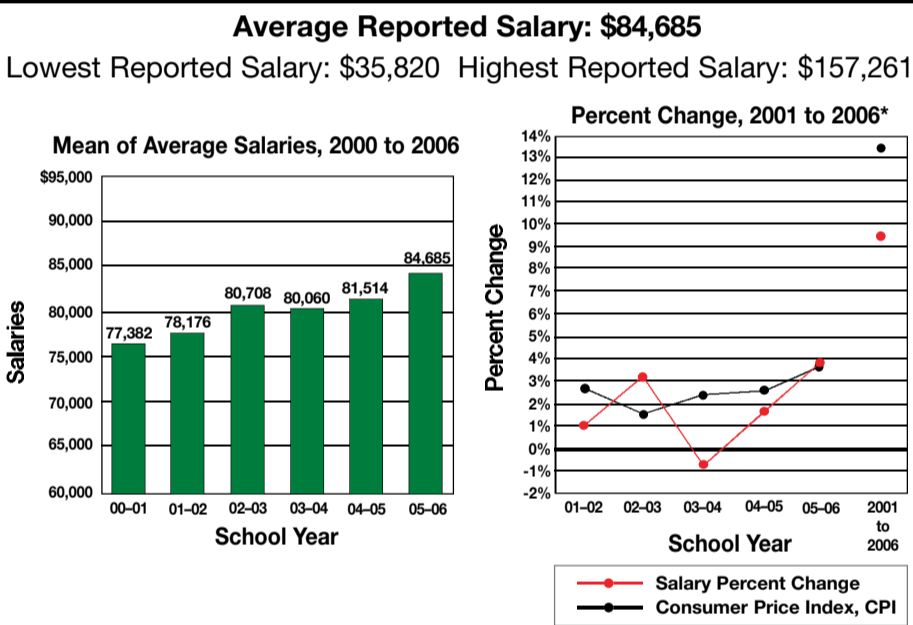
junior high and middle school principals in 2005–06 is \$84,685. For senior high school principals the average is \$90,260. Additionally, the average salaries paid assistant principals in 2005–06 are \$70,268 for junior high and middle schools and \$73,622 for high schools. These data indicate that as the school level of principals and assistant principals increases, so do average salaries.

The geographic region in which a district is located, the enrollment size of the district, and the per-pupil expenditure level of the school district also reveal noteworthy patterns in relation to salary levels. When viewed by geographic region, for example, the data show that principals residing in the Mid-East tend to have the highest average salaries, while those living in the Southwest Rocky Moun-

Current Salary Comparisons

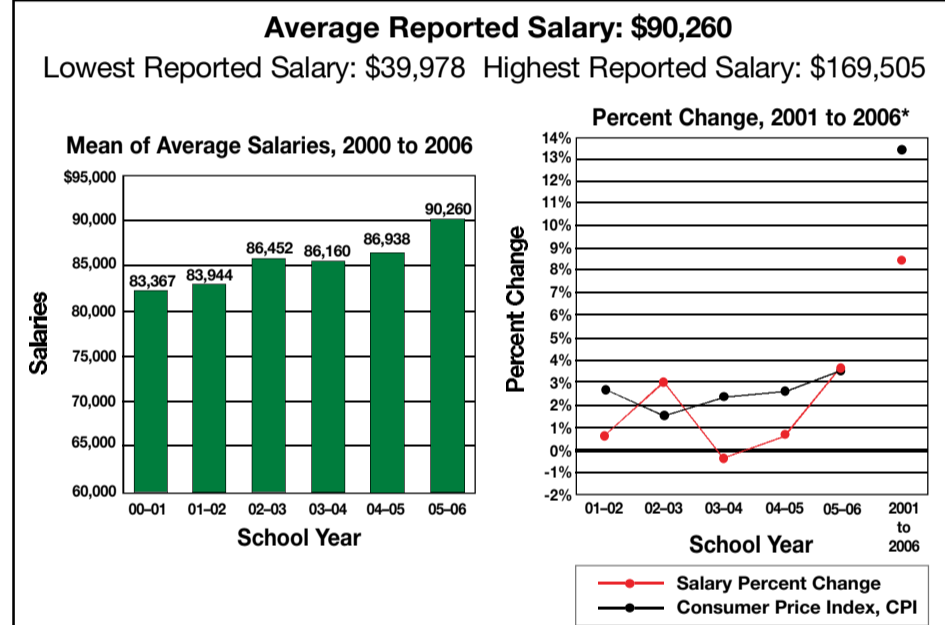
According to the survey, the mean of the average salaries reported by school systems for

TABLE 1
Mean Salaries Paid
JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
in Public School Systems, 2005–06



	Mean of LOWEST Salaries Paid	Mean of AVERAGE Salaries Paid	Mean of HIGHEST Salaries Paid
All Responding Systems	\$81,683	\$84,685	\$87,971
Salaries by Geographic Region^{1**}			
New England	\$92,406	\$92,956	\$93,673
Mid-East	\$95,429	\$97,718	\$99,495
Southeast	\$71,502	\$77,294	\$84,383
Great Lakes	\$84,556	\$85,762	\$87,843
Plains	\$82,365	\$84,438	\$86,632
Southwest	\$68,206	\$71,511	\$75,856
Rocky Mountains	\$71,802	\$75,477	\$78,575
Far West	\$91,756	\$94,778	\$97,007
Salaries by District Pupil Enrollment²			
25,000 or more	\$80,970	\$89,787	\$99,080
10,000 to 24,999	\$82,538	\$87,671	\$93,048
2,500 to 9,999	\$85,401	\$86,744	\$88,050
300 to 2,499	\$74,816	\$74,851	\$74,886
Salaries by District Per-Pupil Expenditure Level^{3**}			
\$9,000 or more	\$86,069	\$88,837	\$91,689
\$8,000 to \$8,999	\$80,813	\$82,946	\$85,882
\$7,000 to \$7,999	\$80,876	\$83,785	\$87,436
\$6,000 to \$6,999	\$79,353	\$83,909	\$88,028
Less than \$6,000	\$68,561	\$72,148	\$75,447

TABLE 2
Mean Salaries Paid
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
in Public School Systems, 2005–06



	Mean of LOWEST Salaries Paid	Mean of AVERAGE Salaries Paid	Mean of HIGHEST Salaries Paid
All Responding Systems	\$87,187	\$90,260	\$93,314
Salaries by Geographic Region^{1**}			
New England	\$101,123	\$101,169	\$101,255
Mid-East	\$101,145	\$103,083	\$104,901
Southeast	\$78,480	\$84,770	\$91,535
Great Lakes	\$87,920	\$88,941	\$90,563
Plains	\$84,771	\$86,984	\$88,650
Southwest	\$78,630	\$81,569	\$84,410
Rocky Mountains	\$74,995	\$79,010	\$82,275
Far West	\$95,594	\$99,768	\$103,297
Salaries by District Pupil Enrollment²			
25,000 or more	\$88,886	\$98,466	\$107,127
10,000 to 24,999	\$92,241	\$97,438	\$102,414
2,500 to 9,999	\$91,804	\$93,842	\$95,226
300 to 2,499	\$77,484	\$77,679	\$77,875
Salaries by District Per-Pupil Expenditure Level^{3**}			
\$9,000 or more	\$90,283	\$93,206	\$95,819
\$8,000 to \$8,999	\$85,648	\$87,917	\$90,012
\$7,000 to \$7,999	\$87,628	\$90,634	\$94,260
\$6,000 to \$6,999	\$84,841	\$89,080	\$93,446
Less than \$6,000	\$75,802	\$79,744	\$83,247

tains tend to have the lowest. For example, high school principals in the Mid-East earn an average salary of \$103,083—14.2% more than the average salary for high school principals across all of the regions. In contrast, the average salary of high school principals in the Rocky Mountains is \$79,010—12.5% lower than the average salary overall. For assistant principals, those residing in the Mid-East region also tend to earn the highest salaries, and those residing in the Southwest tend to have the lowest average.

As one might expect, a school district's enrollment size also affects principals' salaries. The data show that principals and assistant principals from districts with less than 2,500 pupils tend to receive far less than their counterparts from larger districts. To illustrate this point, Table 2 shows that high school principals from districts with larger pupil enrollments (i.e., 2,500 or more) take home salaries ranging from the mid-eighties to the high-nineties, on average. Those from districts with

less than 2,500 pupils, however, take home salaries ranging in the mid- to high-seventies (averaging \$76,265)—17% less than districts with the larger enrollment sizes.

When examined in terms of the per-pupil expenditure level of a district, principals and assistant principals from districts spending \$9,000 or more per pupil tend to receive higher salaries than their counterparts from districts with lower per-pupil expenditure levels. For example, Table 1 shows that junior high and middle school principals from districts with per-pupil expenditure levels of less than \$6,000 earn an average salary of \$72,148—14.8% less than the average salaries overall for junior high and middle school principals. However, junior high and middle-level principals from districts with per-pupil expenditure levels of \$9,000 or more earn an average salary of \$88,837—nearly 5% higher than the average salary for this group overall. A similar pattern exists for senior high school principals and assistant principals.

Data from the *National Survey of Salaries and Wages in Public Schools*, conducted annually since 1973 by Educational Research Service (ERS), can provide answers to these questions. Each year, ERS randomly selects a stratified sample of U.S. school systems of varying pupil enrollment sizes (e.g., 25,000 or more, 10,000 to 24,999; 2,500 to 9,999; and 300 to 2,499) for participation in the survey. Average salaries paid to personnel in 33 professional and support positions are collected. For the 2005–06 school year, 622 school systems throughout the United States reported data. This information provides a national database for school management and policy decisions concerning staff compensation. **NL**

Prepared by Dr. Alicia Williams, Director of Survey Research for Educational Research Service (ERS). Copyrighted in 2006 by ERS. To order Salaries & Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools, 2005–2006, call 800-791-9308 or visit www.ers.org.

¹ States included in geographic region: New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT); Mid-East (DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA); Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV); Great Lakes (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI); Plains (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD); Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX); Rocky Mountains (CO, ID, MT, UT, WY); Far West (AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, WA).

² "Enrollment" is defined as all pupils in grades K–12. Half-day kindergartners are counted as 1/2-pupils.

³ "Per-pupil expenditure" is defined as the amount of the school system's general operating budget (excluding capital outlay, debt services and preK and adult education funds) divided by the enrollment size of the school system.

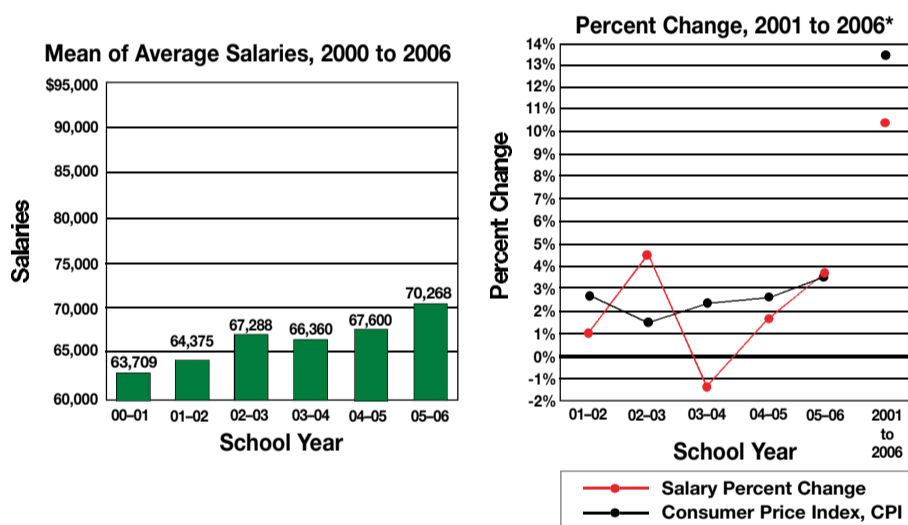
* Percentage change in CPI is for the calendar year beginning in the year shown (e.g., 2005–06 = 2005 CPI year).

** Data categorized by geographic region and per-pupil expenditure level may be subject to considerable sampling and response variation and should be used only as general indicators of the current relationships among the categories. These data are not appropriate for year-to-year trends.

TABLE 3
Mean Salaries Paid
JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS
in Public School Systems, 2005–06

Average Reported Salary: \$70,268

Lowest Reported Salary: \$28,169 Highest Reported Salary: \$135,695

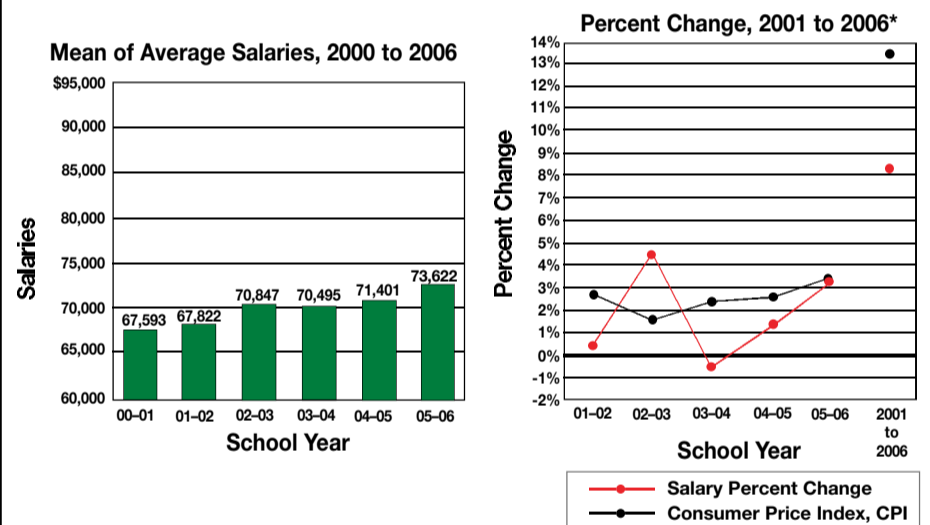


	Mean of LOWEST Salaries Paid	Mean of AVERAGE Salaries Paid	Mean of HIGHEST Salaries Paid
All Responding Systems	\$65,941	\$70,268	\$75,411
Salaries by Geographic Region^{1**}			
New England	\$80,992	\$82,097	\$83,288
Mid-East	\$79,354	\$83,054	\$86,281
Southeast	\$54,126	\$60,770	\$69,377
Great Lakes	\$69,618	\$72,287	\$75,666
Plains	\$67,611	\$71,016	\$75,436
Southwest	\$51,732	\$56,551	\$63,282
Rocky Mountains	\$63,266	\$65,824	\$69,208
Far West	\$75,912	\$80,595	\$84,988
Salaries by District Pupil Enrollment²			
25,000 or more	\$60,706	\$70,681	\$83,366
10,000 to 24,999	\$66,131	\$71,762	\$78,867
2,500 to 9,999	\$68,724	\$71,366	\$73,791
300 to 2,499	\$63,904	\$64,070	\$64,237
Salaries by District Per-Pupil Expenditure Level^{3**}			
\$9,000 or more	\$70,907	\$75,084	\$79,671
\$8,000 to \$8,999	\$67,384	\$70,774	\$75,168
\$7,000 to \$7,999	\$63,959	\$68,864	\$74,673
\$6,000 to \$6,999	\$62,137	\$66,474	\$73,032
Less than \$6,000	\$53,762	\$58,921	\$63,383

TABLE 4
Mean Salaries Paid
SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS
in Public School Systems, 2005–06

Average Reported Salary: \$73,622

Lowest Reported Salary: \$33,420 Highest Reported Salary: \$147,901



	Mean of LOWEST Salaries Paid	Mean of AVERAGE Salaries Paid	Mean of HIGHEST Salaries Paid
All Responding Systems	\$67,958	\$73,622	\$79,331
Salaries by Geographic Region^{1**}			
New England	\$79,461	\$81,960	\$84,367
Mid-East	\$78,701	\$83,018	\$88,799
Southeast	\$55,392	\$64,313	\$73,462
Great Lakes	\$71,441	\$75,160	\$78,639
Plains	\$69,198	\$74,613	\$80,343
Southwest	\$55,273	\$60,541	\$67,870
Rocky Mountains	\$64,645	\$68,370	\$71,604
Far West	\$80,153	\$86,563	\$91,044
Salaries by District Pupil Enrollment²			
25,000 or more	\$64,760	\$75,154	\$87,606
10,000 to 24,999	\$68,546	\$76,841	\$84,911
2,500 to 9,999	\$70,735	\$75,774	\$79,682
300 to 2,499	\$64,752	\$65,065	\$65,357
Salaries by District Per-Pupil Expenditure Level^{3**}			
\$9,000 or more	\$71,989	\$77,287	\$82,311
\$8,000 to \$8,999	\$69,380	\$74,467	\$79,663
\$7,000 to \$7,999	\$66,384	\$72,651	\$79,175
\$6,000 to \$6,999	\$63,587	\$70,012	\$76,906
Less than \$6,000	\$58,525	\$63,446	\$69,119